

NEW  
SERIES

NOVEMBER

VOL.  
43

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
YEAR TO YEAR."

# All the Year Round

a  
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

PART 240.

PRICE  
ELEVENPENCE.

1883.

LONDON  
26 WELLINGTON ST.  
STRAND.

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1040-1044

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

## CHARLES DICKENS

No. 1040, NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

*Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

MADGE crouched on that floor till day-break, hiding her face in her hands. Not till the cold, grey light of early dawn began to find its way in through the chinks of the shutters did she dare to withdraw those hands, lest from out some dark corner there should loom forth a white face and shadowy form.

Her limbs were stiffened, her brain felt dazed, and all power of weeping seemed to have left her, when, at length, she made her way back to her room. All power of feeling seemed to have left her also. Had Lance stood before her once more, she could not have raised the feeblest plea for pity and forgiveness for the Madge Cohen who had sinned and suffered. The reaction from the overstrain of passion was so complete as to seem a positive lull of pain. Over and over again she said to herself, as she threw herself face downwards on her pillows, "He prayed heaven that he might never see my face again," but the bitter words touched no answering chord now. An odd feeling of drowsiness was beginning to creep over her, and she seemed to feel, think, see, and hear, as it were, through a haze.

As the day grew, sounds of movement about the house began. She heard Lance's footsteps pass along the gallery outside her room.

Then in a dim, far-off sort of way she heard his voice outside below her windows giving some order, and presently the sound of wheels told that his dog-cart was being

brought round. She knew in the same dim, far-off way that this meant departure. He was going away, for how long she knew not; and she lacked power—and will, too, it seemed now—to prevent him.

For one moment there came to her a sudden wild longing to look her last at him. She made one great effort, gathering together all the strength that was left in her. It was inadequate, however, to carry her to the window. She succeeded in lifting herself from the bed, only to fall helplessly into a chair, on whose high back she had rested her hand for support. And seated there with face turned towards the window, through which the rosy light of morning was now streaming, she heard the crack of Lance's whip, the plunge of his horses, and presently the sound of wheels dying in the distance.

Then drowsiness seemed to enfold her once more, and thought became a blank to her. And one coming into that room and seeing her seated thus facing the window with head thrown back, and the bright morning sunshine falling on her pale face, might have exclaimed: "One could fancy that sleeping woman was dead!" or another gazing down on her might have said: "Hush, one could fancy that dead woman was sleeping!"

The hour which Madge had passed crouching on the study floor, had been a busy one for Lance. It was in a white heat of passion that he had shaken her touch from his arm, and turned his back on her; but it was a white heat that had method and purpose in it. As he had stood listening to her confession, that purpose had formed. The woman he had loved had been surrounded with mystery from the first day that he had known her, and the cloud of a terrible suspicion rested on

her grave. To clear that mystery, to lift that cloud, should henceforth be the purpose of his life; till this was accomplished everything else in creation would be as naught to him.

His heart was very bitter against Madge. At that moment it was simply out of his power to form any—even the most shadowy—conception of her great love for him. He realised only that she had failed in what seemed to him one of woman's best qualities—pity for the forlorn and desolate—and had, by an act of unexampled cruelty, wrecked his whole life for him. If she had been a man, he said to himself, he would have known how to deal with her; as it was, her conscience must punish her; and so he dismissed her from his thoughts.

He left the study with the intention of making immediate preparations for a journey to Corsica, where he purposed fully investigating the attempt at murder with which Madge had associated Miss Shore. Before he started, however, he would see and explain matters to Sir Peter; also, he would put a few questions to Mr. Stubbs, and demand of him the newspaper containing the paragraph from which Madge had drawn inspiration for her picture. Both interviews, he judged, must wait till a later hour. Meantime, he roused his servant, gave sundry directions as to his packing, and transmitted orders to the stable for his cart to be brought round in time for him to catch the first train from Lower Upton.

On his way back from the servants' quarters he had occasion to pass a small room where Madge was accustomed to write her letters, and where had been placed a small davenport for her sole use. A light shining under the door of this room attracted his attention; it seemed to be extinguished at the approach of his footsteps. A suspicion of burglars for one moment flashed across his mind, and he at once opened the door, to find, not burglars, but Mr. Stubbs immediately behind it. This was the same room in which Madge had, upon one occasion, discovered the self-same individual in a listening posture.

Lance stared at the man, who looked disturbed and flurried.

"What are you doing here at this hour?" cried the young man; and now, for the first time, it occurred to him that, possibly, this man, whom he had been wont to describe as "a harmless old fellow, who did what he was told, and never

got into anybody's way," was not quite what he had imagined him to be.

"I was just on the point of going to bed, sir; I've had a heavy night's work—I've been going through some of Mrs. Cohen's papers," here he glanced at the davenport, "at her request, sir."

Lance still stared hard at the man. He did not see written on his face the fact that Madge's sudden illness had filled him with consternation, and had sent him listening about the house in the dead of night; that, from what he had heard, he had drawn the inevitable conclusion that it was high time he looked to himself, and made provision for the future. All Lance saw in the low brow and narrowing eyes which fronted him was a look of mingled cunning and servility, that filled him with an unutterable contempt, not alone for this miserable specimen of humanity, but also for the woman who could stoop to such a confederate.

"I believe," he said, keeping his eyes fixed contemptuously on the, evidently, disconcerted Mr. Stubbs, "that Mrs. Cohen has employed you in more than one confidential capacity?"

Mr. Stubbs plucked up courage.

"I am proud to say, sir, I have enjoyed Mrs. Cohen's entire confidence, of late," he replied.

"Very well, then, be so good as to fetch me a newspaper which on one occasion you took the trouble to lay before Mrs. Cohen—it contains the account of an attempt at murder at Santa Maura."

Mr. Stubbs's face turned to an ashy whiteness. So, then, his conjectures had been correct. Madge had snapped the alliance between them by making full confession of the part she had played. The question was now, how far she had betrayed his complicity in the matter?

"Did you hear what I said?" asked Lance, his face taking an expression which seemed to Mr. Stubbs a remarkably unpleasant one.

"It's here, sir; here, sir," he said, going to the davenport and taking thence a newspaper, of which Lance at once took possession. "Mrs. Cohen has kept it here ever since I gave it to her. And, sir, will you be so good as to remember that in this matter, from first to last, I have acted entirely under Mrs. Cohen's orders?"

"I congratulate you on the fidelity with which you have carried them out. May I ask your motive for placing a paragraph of

this sort in Mrs. Cohen's hands, instead of in Sir Peter's or mine?"

"I knew Mrs. Cohen's anxiety on the matter, sir; we have been on a very confidential footing, as I've already told you, sir, for some time past. Mrs. Cohen's orders were imperative—I did my best, sir, to carry them out."

Lance, with his wrath against Madge still at white heat, began to see a sufficient reason for the appointment of this wretched being to the lucrative post of land-steward at Redesdale.

What Mr. Stubbs considered an unpleasant expression of countenance deepened on his face.

"I have only this to say," he said, contemptuously, as he folded the newspaper and put it in his pocket, "I shall advise Sir Peter to send you about your business as quickly as possible, and you may thank your stars that you are an old man, instead of a young one, otherwise I should send you out of the house a little quicker than Sir Peter could." Then he turned on his heel and left the man to his own reflections.

Five o'clock was striking as Lance went along the gallery towards his own room. With the last stroke of the clock Sir Peter's door opened, and Sir Peter, fully dressed, came out.

"What, you there, Lance!" he cried. "Now, isn't it a good thing I can wake myself at any hour I choose? If I had depended upon Simmonds I should be sound asleep still, and there's that church bell and a hundred other things to see to before breakfast——"

Lance laid his hand on the old gentleman's shoulder.

"Come into my room for a few minutes, Uncle Peter, I've something to say to you," he said.

"Eh?" said Sir Peter, blithely, "no doubt you have, my boy! I dare say, like me, you've a good many things on your mind, just now—not to be wondered at in a bridegroom elect."

Lance lost no time in preamble.

"There'll be no wedding to-day, nor any other day, so far as I am concerned," he said, as he shut the door behind Sir Peter; "I am going away, at once, to Corsica."

"At once! to Corsica!" repeated Sir Peter, utterly unable to credit his senses.

"Yes, I shall start in about half-an-hour's time. I have something to do—there, read this"—here he handed the

newspaper to Sir Peter—"I have just heard, for the first time, that Miss Shore is supposed to be the person who made the attempt at murder there related. I shall make it my business to prove the supposition false."

But Sir Peter's senses were still beclouded. "Miss Shore—attempt at murder—I don't understand," he repeated, blankly.

Lance grew impatient. "If you'll read that paragraph, you will understand—I've no time to go into details; I tell you, simply, I'm off to Corsica at once, to do my utmost to clear the reputation of a young lady who was once a guest in this house."

Sir Peter, recollecting a certain half-hour he had spent with Lance at Liverpool, began to understand. "But, my dear boy, what will Madge say——"

"Madge has said all she has to say on the matter—to me," interrupted Lance, sharply; "and I may as well tell you at once that everything is at an end between Madge and me."

"No, no, no! my dear boy," cried Sir Peter, "no, no, not possible! You don't mean to say—you can't—that there's to be no wedding this morning?"

Lance crossed the room and stood in front of Sir Peter.

"Uncle Peter," he said, "look in my face and see that I mean every word I say; I would put a bullet through my brain sooner than marry Madge Cohen."

There came a rap at the door, and a servant announced that the cart had been brought round.

Lance hailed thankfully an excuse for cutting his farewell short. "I'll write to you from Dover," he said. "I shall most likely have an hour or two to wait there. Shake hands, Uncle Peter, there's nothing for you to break your heart over." This was added a little bitterly, with emphasis on the pronoun.

Uncle Peter held out his hand; once, twice he cleared his throat very loudly, but still words would not come.

Lance's hard, even voice was a curious contrast to the old gentleman's want of self-control. "I would suggest that you should take the blame of the broken engagement on yourself," said the young man; "it will be easy for you to say that you did not consider that I, in my changed position, was a suitable match for Madge, with her wealth—it might save any feeling of wounded pride on her part."

The words "in my changed position" brought back Sir Peter's voice, though but a quaking, tremulous one.

"Lance," he said, huskily, holding the young man's hand in a tight grip, "where-ever you go, whatever you do, don't forget what I said to you a little while ago, that if you do not take the place of my eldest son now, you take that of my youngest and best-loved—best-loved, do you hear, Lance?"

"Thank you, Uncle Peter. At present the future is a blank to me; but I shall always be glad to remember your farewell words."

"And, Lance," the old gentleman went on, still holding Lance's hand in his, "you'll draw your supplies as usual; you won't let this—this make any difference?"

Lance's reply was short, and all but inaudible.

Then he wrenched his hand away and was gone.

And Sir Peter, after gazing blankly at the closed door for a moment or two, sat down and cried like a child over his broken toys.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI

THAT was to be a day of departures. Sir Peter had scarcely time to dry his eyes and reflect on what a harassing day's work he would have to get through, before Mr. Stubbs, equipped for travelling, presented himself.

If Sir Peter had not been so occupied with his own subjects of thought, he would have noticed the anxious look on the man's face, the nervous twitching of the corners of his mouth.

"I've come to say good-bye, Sir Peter. I suppose I had better start at once," he said, looking this way, that way, all ways; but never once at Sir Peter.

"Eh! What! You going, too, Stubbs?" ejaculated Sir Peter, trying all in a moment to collect his thoughts and arrange some settled plan for meeting the day's difficulties.

The warmth of Sir Peter's greeting reassured Mr. Stubbs. Things had happened then as he had surmised they might—Mr. Clive had been so occupied with his own affairs that he had forgotten to give Sir Peter the warning he had threatened respecting the rascality of the man he employed to open his letters.

"I think the sooner I start the better, if you've no objection, Sir Peter," he

replied. "You see, I enter upon my duties at Redesdale, in ten days' time. You were good enough to tell me I might take a ten days' holiday before I got to work there——"

"Yes, yes; I remember, my good friend. Take a holiday, and welcome, but——"

Here he broke off, and began what, compared with his usual quick tramp backwards and forwards, was a veritable funeral march from end to end of the room.

"I will make it my business, before anything else," Mr. Stubbs went on, "to enquire fully into the antecedents of the gentleman who has been recommended as my successor here, and, meantime, there is the lad the Vicar spoke of."

"Yes, yes, I know; but I was thinking whether I could do without you to-day. I've a very great deal to see to and arrange."

Sir Peter paused abruptly in his walk. Now, how far should he take Mr. Stubbs into his confidence on this very delicate matter?

"Do you refer to the wedding arrangements?" asked Mr. Stubbs, scanning furtively Sir Peter's anxious features.

"No, no. I fear—a—h'm—I greatly fear, Stubbs, the wedding will have to be put off—for a time, that is."

"Put off, sir!" This was said with a great show of surprise. "May I ask if anything unforeseen has occurred?"

Sir Peter thought for a moment. The only way he could see out of his difficulties that day was by the juvenile course of fibbing. He must fib prodigiously all day long, he said to himself, so he might as well begin at once.

"No, no; nothing unforeseen has happened. I'm sorry to say I've noticed for some time past that Mrs. Cohen's health has been failing, and by my express advice—my advice, do you see, Mr. Stubbs?—the wedding will be deferred till she pulls round a little."

"I see, Sir Peter. And Mr. Clive has started off, I suppose, for Carstairs, to get further medical advice?" asked Mr. Stubbs, still furtively regarding Sir Peter.

"Exactly, exactly," ejaculated Sir Peter. "Splendid idea, that," he thought to himself, "I'll enlarge upon it." "At least," he went on, "I advised that course; but Mr. Clive said: 'No, there's not a man in Carstairs I'd trust in a case like this; I shall go straight to London, and consult a man there who makes fainting fits a specialty.'"

And then the old gentleman sighed and thought to himself:

"Dear me, I wonder if I shall forget all that, and say something quite different before the day's out!"

Mr. Stubbs was all sympathy.

"I fear it will be a harassing time for you, Sir Peter; I would willingly stay on a day or two longer, but I've some pressing private affairs of my own——"

"Ah, yes, that boy of yours; I remember you told me all about him, and I promised you a cheque, didn't I, in addition to your pay?"

"I should be very grateful for it, Sir Peter; I'm fitting him out now for the Colonies, and as I told you, I should like to give him a little capital to start with."

"Ah, yes; I remember. Come into the study a minute, you shall have your cheque at once; and don't forget, if any one asks you about the wedding being put off, it's all my doing, on account of Mrs. Cohen's health, and Mr. Clive has gone to Carstairs—no, to London, I mean—to consult a leading doctor about her."

So Mr. Stubbs departed with a handsome cheque in addition to his handsome quarterly salary. And if any one had taken the trouble to watch his movements on his arrival at Carstairs, they might have seen that instead of taking a ticket direct for London as he had told Sir Peter he intended to do, he made Liverpool his destination.

Sir Peter's fibs grew in number and variety as the day went on. Lady Judith unintentionally gave an impetus to them.

About seven o'clock she rustled downstairs in an extra allowance of skirt and floating lace lappets, expecting to find arrangements for the wedding in a satisfactory state of progress. The hints which her maid had let fall during the process of dressing had been uttered so timorously that they had not arrested her attention.

Sir Peter met her at the foot of the stairs, feeling that the sooner she was put into possession of the leading facts of the matter the better.

"Madge is not down—she is no better," he shouted into her ears. "Wedding must be put off—I've sent for the Vicar."

Lady Judith was all startled attention in a moment.

"This comes of doing things in a hurry——" she began.

Sir Peter knew that a sermon would follow on this text, but did not feel in the mood to provide an audience.

"Lance has gone to London to consult doctors—bring back one with him," he shouted again.

"Lance gone—where? Bring back whom?" questioned the lady, only catching half his sentence.

"Stubbs has gone off, too—to London," Sir Peter went on, anxious to put her in possession of all the facts necessary for her to know in as short a space of time as possible.

"What, Stubbs and Lance are gone off together?"

"No, not together, one after the other."

"What, Lance has gone off after Stubbs! Another protégé has disappeared! They do you credit, Sir Peter, I must say, these protégés of yours! First one, then another! They make themselves at home in the house, and get all they can out of you, and then they disappear and commit suicide, or do something else disgraceful. And as for Lance going in pursuit of the man, I do think——"

"No, no, no," shouted Sir Peter, "Stubbs is right enough—Lance—too." Then he stood on tip-toe, and with a stentorian voice, added—"Gone—after—doctors."

And it was not until Lady Judith had commenced an oration on the folly of two men starting in quest of one doctor, that he realised the fact that his story had already slightly deviated from its original form.

Later on in the day, when he began seriously to consider the state of affairs—the reality of the estrangement between Lance and Madge, and the difficulties which might lie in the way of putting things once more on an amicable footing between them—it occurred to him that an even greater modification of his original statement was necessary.

The Vicar, who was to have performed the wedding ceremony, was looked upon as the fountain-head of gossip in the neighbourhood; to him, therefore, it would be necessary to tell a story which the county would be expected to credit, as a true statement of affairs.

So when the worthy clergyman, in response to a hurried note from Sir Peter, presented himself at the Castle, the story which he was asked to give credence to, was that Sir Peter had taken advantage of the weak state of Mrs. Cohen's health to defer a marriage, which, since the change in Mr. Clive's position, was scarcely so desirable a match for her as it had at one time seemed.

"Heaven help me!" sighed the old gentleman, buttoning up his coat and going for a weary little trot by himself in the park. "How I'm to remember all these different stories, and stick to the right one to the right person, is more than I know!"

Before, however, that day came to an end, Sir Peter had ceased to trouble about the number and variety of his fibs; in fact, had no heart left in him for fibs of any sort.

About noon a message was brought to him from Madge that she wished to see him at once and alone. Sir Peter went up to her room to find her seated in the same high-backed chair into which she had fallen in her endeavour to get a last glimpse of Lance. There her maid had found her on resuming her attendance at seven o'clock in the morning, and, seated thus, she had endured a disturbing quarter of an hour of Lady Judith's society. Neither the maid nor Lady Judith, however, had read in Madge's face the story of her utterly broken physical health; to both she had protested a little feebly, it might be, that she felt better and would be quite herself before the day was over. Sir Peter was not a sharp-sighted man, and as a rule nothing was easier than to persuade him into taking an optimistic view of the gloomiest situation. On this occasion, however, his first look into Madge's face put all optimistic views to flight, and sent him to her side with a pained, startled cry on his lips:

"My child, my child, what is it—what has pulled you down in this way?"

Madge was still in the long, white gown she had worn overnight. Her hair strayed in loose disorder about her white face. Her head leaned wearily on one hand, the other rested on the arm of the chair.

"Hasn't Broughton been to see you, my child? He must be sent for at once!" pursued Sir Peter, making for the bell there and then to give orders for the immediate attendance of the doctor.

Madge's voice arrested him. It sounded weak, and far away—so far away, indeed, that he could almost have fancied that she was speaking to him from the other side of a wall.

"Not now, not yet. Will you sit down a moment? I have something to say to you—to confess to you," she added, correctingly.

"I know all, my child; Lance has told me," said Sir Peter, hurriedly, thinking that he knew to what she referred.

Then as he looked down into her haggard face, with something written on it which he had never seen there before, he uttered his first and only reproach against Lance.

"Why is not Lance here?" he cried. "It's disgraceful that with you in this state he should start off on a wild fancy of his own!"

Madge sighed. "Lance was right to go; if he had not gone I must——"

She broke off for a moment. Then she took Sir Peter's hand in hers. "Will you sit down and listen to me?" she said, faintly. "It isn't the story I told Lance—it won't take long to tell."

Sir Peter, with a scared look on his face, sat down. And Madge, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, and in a monotone like that of a child repeating a weary lesson, told the story of how she had tampered with the old gentleman's correspondence, and had kept back the tidings of Gervase Critchett's only boy.

Straightforwardly and simply she told the tale. On Mr. Stubbs's share in the matter she touched but lightly—she had no wish to claim palliation for her offence by magnifying his share in it.

"He would have done anything I told him to do for money," she said, simply, in reply to Sir Peter's astonished exclamation, "Stubbs did that!"

Her last word left her without voice, wherein to plead for forgiveness. And Sir Peter had no voice wherewith to utter it. But all the same she knew that it lay in his heart for her. And he knew that she knew it was there, without any telling on his part.

#### OLD HAMMERSMITH AND CHISWICK.

APPROACHING Hammersmith from Fulham, among a strange medley of market-gardens, new streets, workshops, and factories, an old-fashioned house may be noticed on the left-hand side of the road, which bears the inscription, Brandenburg House. This is not indeed the original Brandenburg, but it seems to have been constructed on the site of the offices of the old house, and behind it is still a part of the grounds, beyond which can be seen the factory, with its tall chimneys, which fronts to the river, and occupies the foundations of old Brandenburg House. It was a famous house in its time, with terraces and gardens upon the river shore, not far below the present Hammersmith

Bridge. The house was originally built by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a farmer of the revenue and Guinea trader, the son of Ellis Crispe, of Hammersmith, and the first native of the hamlet who achieved any distinction. He built the Castle of Cormantine on the Guinea coast, and also erected a handsome monument, which still exists in the parish church, to the memory of his unhappy master, King Charles the First, at the foot of which is enshrined the heart of the worthy and faithful knight. The house at Hammersmith was afterwards sold to Prince Rupert, and occupied by one Mistress Hughes. It was afterwards occupied by Bubb Doddington (Lord Melcombe), and then it was bought by the Margravine of Anspach, a daughter of the Earl of Berkeley, who shared to the full the wild, stirring blood of her race. As Lady Craven—she was married at seventeen to the Peer of that ilk—she holds a distinguished place in the scandalous chronicles of the period, and as Margravine she was never received at Court, or acknowledged by the powers that were.

Still the Margravine held her ground as a leader of society, and in her time Hammersmith was perhaps gayer and more festive than it ever was before, or is likely to be again. There were fêtes on the river, water-frolics, and regattas of the gayest. The lady herself was an excellent actress, and assembled a distinguished amateur theatrical company about her. On days when she entertained, the Broadway was crowded with the carriages and equipages of the nobility and gentry.

The Margravine passed away and was succeeded by Queen Caroline, who, as the uncrowned Queen of George the Fourth, held her Court here. Then also there were bustling times at Hammersmith—not much gaiety of heart, but plenty of hearty political anger and malice. Sometimes the river would be crowded with a flotilla of sympathisers coming up with the flood from Westminster, to congratulate and cheer Her Majesty upon the favourable result of the great trial. And all the lions of the opposition would be driving along the Broadway, Harry Brougham, henceforth famous, the most conspicuous figure among them. Then, too, Theodore Hook wings her with his barbed rhymes:

What saw you at Brandenburg. heigh, ma'am, ho,  
ma'am,

What saw you at Brandenburg ho?

We saw a great dame, with a face red as flame,

And a character spotless as snow, snow,

A character spotless as snow!

Soon, however, came the last dismal scene of all, when, from Brandenburg House, in a cold and drenching rain, the poor Queen's funeral equipage started upon its progress amid scenes of the wildest riot and confusion.

Just opposite Brandenburg House stands an old house done in red stucco, which is peeling off everywhere, while a board peering above the high garden wall announces that the site is on sale for building purposes. This is Sussex House, once the residence of the Duke of Sussex—one of the steadiest and most respectable of the sons of George the Third—a homely, good-natured Prince, who enjoyed nothing better than a long clay pipe at some neighbouring tavern, and a gossip with the boatmen along the shore. After the Duke's time, the house became a lunatic asylum, and now its extensive grounds will ere long be parcelled out in building lots.

Another noteworthy house stands among a row of modern houses facing the church to the eastward. This is Bradmore House, which formed a part of old Butterwick House, built in the reign of Elizabeth, by Edmund Sheffield, Lord Mulgrave, an ancestor of the Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, who gave its title to Buckingham Palace. This part was cut off and partly rebuilt by Sir Elijah Impey, the father of that famous—or as some would have it, Macaulay among the rest, that infamous—Elijah, who was Warren Hastings's faithful friend and instrument.

Where the Bath Road enters the parish of Hammersmith—a point well marked by the railway and Addison Road Station and the adjacent "Olympia"—there existed one of the earliest established nursery grounds in the metropolis. It was known as Lee's Vineyard Nursery, and was formerly planted with vines, and produced native Burgundy till the middle of the last century. The Vineyard Nursery became famous for the introduction and acclimatisation of foreign plants. It claims the introduction of the fuchsia and of the first China rose. Glass-houses and hot-houses still bear the old name and designation; but the old vineyard is mostly built over, and gardens and nurseries further afield have taken its place.

A little further along the road, Brook Green opens out, where there was once a noted fair, which existed till the year 1823. Just within the Green stands a Roman Catholic settlement of the most complete

character, with church and homes for the poor, and schools, quite mediæval in arrangement and appearance. And a little way on, formerly stood one of the oldest nunneries in England, which had preserved its existence, in some form or other, through the perils of the Reformation, and which became also a famous school for the daughters of the Roman Catholic aristocracy. The old house disappeared within the last few years to make room for the buildings of a seminary for priests.

Old Brook Green has been saved from the builders, and now is a public recreation ground, surrounded by terraces of modern villas of Queen Anne type, with a few of the old original kind still remaining.

Another old Green still survives—that of Shepherd's Bush—once the resort of highwaymen, where a gibbet stood for their encouragement. And the Goldhawk Road, which passes thereby, is not without interest, as it follows the track of the old Roman road to Chichester and the West. Indeed, when the Goldhawk Road was made—for it existed previously only as a country lane, leading to the Manor of Coldhawe, and to commons and open fields, where Bedford Park is now placed—a Roman causeway was discovered some feet below the existing surface; while the name of Stanford Brook, where the ancient road crossed a small stream by a paved ford, still bears witness to the existence of the Roman highway.

Along this road were scattered many public greens and commons. Starch Green, which now only survives in name, and in the form of an ornamental pond by the roadside; Gagglegoose Green, now entirely vanished from the scene; and Paddingwick Green, also built over, where once stood the ancient Manor House of Pallingswick. Pallingswick Manor once belonged to Alice Perrers, the favourite of Edward the Third, in the last sad, inglorious days of the old monarch; and, according to tradition, the old Manor House was once a Royal hunting seat resorted to by the Black Prince. More modern possessors of the Manor transferred their residence to Ravenscourt, where there is a small but handsomely timbered park of some thirty acres, which has recently been acquired by the district authorities and devoted to the purposes of a public park; while the house, described by Faulkner as "a capital mansion built after Mansart's style," but which is of a very ordinary

description, is intended for the Hammer-smith Public Library.

For what else is left of Old Hammer-smith we must hie back to the river; noting on the way that the old church, with its red-brick tower and quaint campanile, has been replaced by a handsome Gothic building. But hereabouts everything has changed, or is in process of change. The old brick houses with red-tiled roofs, or with those high-pitched roofs of slate, which once gave Hammersmith rather a foreign aspect; these have now been replaced with tall, modern shops and "emporiums." The tramcars starting for Kew Bridge; the innumerable and rival omnibuses; the rival stations which announce their shortest and best routes to the City; make a bustle and turmoil about Hammersmith Broadway that can hardly have been equalled in the days of the lively Margravine, or of the vehement Queen Caroline.

It is quieter by the river, where the new bridge has not exactly the lightsome, graceful aspect of the old, but still is very well as a suspension bridge, and looks strong enough anyhow. Boating men still linger about Biffen's, and the autumn sunshine has brought out a few racing fours, that dash up and down the glittering river; and there is always the sculler, who, regardless of wind or weather, slides to and fro on his frail craft like some mechanical wooden figure. Then there are the old-fashioned houses with the roomy balconies, which look a little silent and deserted, as if the hospitable race who once tenanted them, had died out and left no successors. An open door gives a glimpse of a quiet little Friends' meeting-house with a sunny garden about it, which suggests that Hammersmith was formerly a favoured residence of the people called Quakers.

The continuity of the riverside walk is now broken by the creek—a tidal stream running up among narrow lanes and overhanging houses, inhabited mostly by people who know the ways of a barge upon the tidal waters. But the persevering pedestrian will find a foot-bridge, and a narrow paved walk which leads to the "Doves."

The "Doves" remains as of old, a quaint, waterside tavern, with its landing stage to the river, pretty much as when poet Thomson resorted to its quiet sanded parlour, and studied the winter aspect of the river, and jotted down verses for his "Seasons." And taking boat hence one

autumnal day for his home at Kew, honest Thomson caught that chill which brought him to his grave.

At the "Doves" begins the Upper Mall with its fine old elms, which were planted, they say, by Catherine, the Queen of Charles the Second, who lived during her widowhood on the Upper Mall, till she went home to Portugal to end her days. The river-terrace still retains an aspect of old-fashioned dignity, till its course is finished by the intrusive oil mills, which occupy the foreshore for some distance. Then comes Hammersmith Terrace, which brings us to Chiswick and its Mall, with the eyot in front of it, bordered with willows, and the quiet back-water, which is sometimes only back-mud. Some famous old houses are still left—Walpole House for one—of the squareness that came in with the Dutch King, but distinguished, too, with fine fluted wooden columns supporting a corner, and making an admirable porch. Here they say, ended her days, the notorious Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, the most splendid and dissolute of all King Charles the Second's sultanas. Among the houses which have disappeared, and have been replaced by modern villas, is the old "College House," formerly an infirmary for Westminster School, where Dr. Busby, the eminent head master, with his birch and his young friends, took refuge during the great plague, and which was afterwards the locale of the famous Chiswick Press.

A more modern resident in the Mall has given his name to a new road, the Weltje Road, a name which excites a gentle curiosity as to how it got there. Weltje was "chef de cuisine" at Carlton House, an excellent fellow by all accounts, who in his retirement at Chiswick, gave capital dinners, and was much respected by the literati and wits of his period.

At the point of the eyot is Chiswick Ferry, and the back-water has long been a favourite "lay-by" for barges, and on Sundays quite a flotilla of these craft may be seen at anchor there, or quietly resting on the muddy bank.

With Chiswick churchyard the river walk comes abruptly to an end, and our way would bring us into Chiswick village; but we can turn off by Chiswick Lane, which has its own associations, and is, moreover, a pleasant shaded lane, where the birds twitter pleasantly, and spreading elms overarch the footway. A little way up the lane to the left is Mawson House, with a terrace of handsome Queen Anne

houses, in one of which Alexander Pope and his father probably lived for a time, before the poet settled at Twickenham. Here lodged, too—somewhere in the lane, that is, and near a grocer's shop—Jean Jacques Rousseau, who, had he been in the humour, might have given a picture of Chiswick that would have charmed the world. Rousseau, we are told, came to lodge in the lane, to be near his friend, Dr. William Rose, who had a large school in the same locality, a man eminent in his day, and if his epitaph in Chiswick churchyard is to be believed, of almost superhuman virtues and acquirements. Anyhow, the great lexicographer thought highly of him, and would often exhaust his friend's teapot—but never the patience of good Mrs. Rose.

A fine large house, of the days of the first George, near the top of the lane, is called the Manor House, and recalls the fact that the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul's is the lord of the Manors of Chiswick, which are two in number, and are characterised as the Dean and Prebendary Manors respectively. This house in Chiswick Lane represents the Prebendary Manor—a bill on a neighbouring wall announces a sale of copyhold tenements under the Prebendary Manor, so that the lordship is still a going concern. The Dean's Manor is represented by Sutton Court, at the other end of the parish.

A tramcar will carry us to the extreme limits of Chiswick by Kew Bridge. One or two old taverns, standing back from the road, recall the old post and coaching road to Bath. There is the "Roebuck," an ancient-looking house; the "Old Windmill," with a curious old sun-dial over the door, and the motto: "So flies life away." There is the "Pack Horse and Talbot," too, of ancient fame, though now rebuilt; but what brings about the conjunction in the sign is not evident at first sight, till the polite historian explains it for us—"The talbot, a trusty species of dog so called, accompanied the horses, and stopped to watch the goods while the travellers were refreshing themselves at the inns on the roads." The mention of these old wayside taverns reminds us that we have forgotten another survival of old times, the old "Red Cow," next to the new red buildings of St. Paul's School, which is quite a picture of an old tavern with its bow windows and red curtains, and has been time out of mind a house of call for those going to or coming from Covent

Garden Market. And here every forenoon you may see a line of carts drawn up, piled high with empty baskets, while the drowsy waggoners, who have been all night on the road, refresh themselves and water their horses. A rude tablet on the wall above the horse-trough bore, not long ago, the following inscription :

All you who water horses here,  
Must pay a penny or drink some beer.

What carman would hesitate with such a choice before him ?

Kew Bridge is in sight at last with its high-crowned arches, and Brentford with its gasometers and water towers. Now our way is not in their direction at all, but down by the river-bank where a number of barges are lying half aground, and a narrow, plashy road leads in the direction of Strand on the Green. Not many of the thousands who come to Kew think of visiting Strand on the Green, but there is a mighty pleasant walk there along a causeway by the river. Quaint cottages and enviable little houses with high steps are terraced on the way ; old boats, old barges, and old mooring posts fall placidly into decay ; there are barge-building yards and malt-houses, and funny little courts leading one knows not where. And from the foot-path the river assumes an aspect new and noble, with a grand sky overhead, a soft, shining, cloudy sky, with broad reflections on the water, boats and barges sending glittering ripples among the dark shadows.

Here are little taverns, too, jolly and snug, where boatmen and bargees feel themselves at home ; and among them all—coming as a surprise to those who had no faith in the existence of such a body-politic as a living organism—the *dépôt* and headquarters of the Thames Conservancy heave in sight. Here are funny little bills exhibited in funny little windows— notices about locks and weirs, cautions to mariners, and other announcements, which look as if they came out of some collection of ancient broadsheets. Close by, the modern world reasserts itself in an electric storage installation, and in the adjoining yard an electric launch is on the stocks, with double screws, and no inside to speak of, which is destined to electrify the Thames by-and-by.

All is so pleasant that one is sorry when the Causeway comes to an end, and a broad, new road presents itself, and the villas of New Chiswick. Now we are at Grove End, a fine modern mansion, on

sale at present, and whereabouts is Grove Park, laid out in new roads, bordered by grandiose new villas. The old Grove House is perhaps somewhere still existing, but shorn of its fine park, and about house and park history has little to say, although that little is pleasant enough.

Grove House, according to Faulkner, belonged, in the last century, to the Right Honourable Henry Morrice, an eccentric lover of animals, who turned the place into a kind of asylum for horses and dogs. His horses, of which he had a large stud, were not expected to work, but were turned out into the park to enjoy themselves, and were provided with an attendant boy to flap the flies off—certainly a humane provision in the days when horses' tails were docked, and the poor animals were defenceless against insect pests. When he died, A.D. 1790, Mr. Morrice bequeathed the house and grounds to a female friend, on condition that the horses and dogs on the establishment should be carefully fed and attended to, and enjoy their accustomed quarters, while an old servant was to be lodged there as long as he lived. By the year 1819 all the animals were dead, and the old servant had been gathered to his fathers, and the legatee sold the place, and reaped the reward of her patience in the handsome purchase-money.

Everything is wonderfully still and quiet in this secluded quarter. Here a new road is laid out, but the side-walks are covered with grass, and, turning towards the river, the scene that meets the eye is of a purely sylvan character. Hardly a roof is to be seen, but everywhere woods and meadows ; and the hills that bound the horizon are darkened with belts of forest trees. We might be a thousand miles away from London, although actually we may hear Saint Paul's clock strike the hour. The wooded hills are those of Richmond Park, and the woodland scene is no optical delusion, but a stretch of real, wild, forest-land. There are fine clumps of Spanish chestnuts further on, and a cart-road leads to a charming spot, with a pool secluded in a shady grove where a swan, like that upon Saint Mary's loch, "floats double, swan and shadow." This is close by the Grove Park boat-house, which now belongs to the vivacious and energetic "Polytechnic," and the cart-road leads past the club-house to the river-bank, where a steam-crane is at work landing spoil, or ballast, in the way of earth from a huge barge ; while a short tram-line

carries off the loaded trucks to discharge their loads elsewhere. There is Mortlake Church on the other side of the river, and the Ship, and the wide foreshore, backed by the low horizon of green common, broken by houses and trees. On this side is the spot known as Barker's Rails; the winning post of the University Boat Race.

All beyond is indefinite, plashy banks, market gardens, mud, osier beds, and slimy creeks; a part of the world unreachable, undiscoverable. There is nothing for it but to turn back and explore the overland route. And that brings us past Chiswick Station, which is like a station in the backwoods, and into Burlington Lane.

It is a long lane that has no turning; but Burlington Lane has many turnings, and yet it is plaguey long. Yet it is pleasant this autumn day on the sunny side of a mellow brick wall overhung with chestnut trees, while on the other side are meadows and plantations. It is noon, and the boys released from school are whooping along the lane, or shying stones and sticks into the trees to bring down the horse chestnuts, so that what with falling nuts and stones, and fragments of timber, the situation becomes rather perilous. Where the chestnuts fall there is ivy hanging over, about which all the flies and insects of the neighbourhood have gathered. Here and there, through iron gateways, you get a glimpse of the trim lawns and gardens of Chiswick House—even of the house itself, cold and severe, yet not exactly unpleasing; the house of which Lord Hervey said, "that it was too small to live in, and too large to hang to one's watch." But that was before the wings on either side were added. The house was built by the architectural Earl of Burlington, whom Pope addresses:

You, too, proceed! make falling arts your care,  
Erect new wonders and the old repair,  
Jones and Palladio to themselves restore,  
And be whate'er Vitruvius was before.

The task of restoring Jones to himself, is an allusion to the gateway designed by Inigo Jones, for an entrance to Beaufort House, Chelsea—the site of Sir Thomas More's old house—which, when the house was pulled down, was bought by Lord Burlington, and re-erected in his own grounds. As Pope makes the gate repeat its history:

I was brought from Chelsea last year,  
Batter'd with wind and weather;  
Inigo Jones put me together,  
Sir Hans Sloane  
Let me alone,  
Burlington brought me hither.

An old house which stood upon the same site was the residence of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, the hero of the scandalous affair with Lady Essex, which was the talk of the town and the gown in the days of James the First. Whatever the Earl's youthful errors or crimes may have been, the latest act of his life with which we are acquainted, shows him in the light of a kind and devoted father, sacrificing himself for his daughter's welfare.

The Earl's only daughter had formed an ardent and reciprocated affection for Lord Russell, the son of the Duke of Bedford. The Earl was but poor; and my Lord of Bedford loved money a little too much. He must have twelve thousand pounds with his son's wife, or there should be no match. The dowry seemed unattainable, and the marriage was broken off. But, seeing his daughter sad and miserable, the father "chose rather to undo himself than make his daughter unhappy." He raised twelve thousand pounds by selling everything—all his plate, jewels, and household stuff; sold, even, the very house over his head; and, having secured his daughter's happiness, spent the remainder of his days in indigence and obscurity. The eldest son of this idolised daughter was the Lord Russell who suffered on the scaffold for his supposed share in the Rye House Plot. And in virtue of some genealogical tangle, which we have not space to unravel, it seems that Chiswick House has actually come back to the right heirs of the unhappy Earl and his daughter. Chiswick House is noticeable, too, as the deathplace of Fox and Canning—each a visitor at the house when death threw his fatal dart.

But all these reflections do not shorten Burlington Lane, which runs on interminable, as it seems, till it ends at last where a path between high brick walls brings us directly into the churchyard. It is still a place for the dead, for the generosity of the House of Cavendish has added acre after acre to the original land, and thus here are tombs of yesterday, freshly garlanded with flowers, as well as the formal monuments of worthies whose name and fame are buried, too, in Time's great graveyard. "De Louthembourg, R.A.," greets us from a square ugly monument; Charles Holland, of Drury Lane Theatre, a friend of Garrick's, is represented by a handsome tomb; and many of more or less note repose around, among whom are Mary, Countess of Fauconberg, daughter of Oliver Cromwell, who lived at

Sutton Court, in this parish; Miles Corbet, the regicide; and Barbara Villiers, already mentioned in connection with Chiswick Mall. Here is an old tomb belonging to members of the Towneley family of Lancashire, with the inscription R.I.P.; and it is said that other Roman Catholic families have vaults in Chiswick churchyard.

Passing under the old tower, erected at charge and cost of William Bordall, vicar, who died 1435—and now all that remains of the old church, which has been superseded by a recent Gothic edifice—we come to the south side of the church, where stands William Hogarth's monument, crowned by an urn from which issues a gilded flame. It is as pleasant a nook as can be imagined, with a glimpse of the river flowing by, with white sails gleaming here and there, but shut out from the silent highway by old quaint roofs which rise over the mellow brick wall, lined with old monuments.

After visiting the painter's tomb, it is a point of duty to visit Hogarth's house, which lies close at hand. It is up Hogarth's Lane, a rather miry lane, bordered by workmen's dwellings. The garden gate is wide open, and there is the plain, old-fashioned house, three-cornered in shape, with its front to the wild, tangled, yet prolific garden, with its glowing autumn blooms and riotous scarlet-runners. The chief feature of the house is a great projecting bow from the first-floor, supported by an iron column. Here is decadence and decay, and yet all is in keeping, a broken window here and there, everything worn and rubbed—for the house now seems to be let off in tenements. Hogarth, himself, might find a subject here; a cheerful and portly dame cutting a nosegay from the straggling flowers, a litter of pigs rooting about and scampering along the garden walks—it might be the very litter of pigs that occasions the catastrophe in the "election" series—workmen tramping in for dinner; and overhead are the leaden vases which David gave to his friend, William. Yes, they still stand over the gateway, those same vases, and, indeed, the whole place might be just as the painter left it, allowing for a few years of miscellaneous wear and tear.

The village of Chiswick, too, still retains its ancient charm, and shows its "Burlington Arms"—a timber-framed house of the seventeenth century; and Chiswick Square, which retains the very aroma of the courtly days of good Queen Anne.

But the hour has struck. Thorneycroft's men are hurrying back to the torpedo works, and there is no more question about Chiswick, except how to get away from it. "It makes no odds which road you go, any one will lead you into the high road," says a polite workman; and as far as distance is concerned, he is right; but it is a chance whether you fall into a terribly long street of small workmen's houses, or some nice country lane. Anyhow it is far enough from the haunts of omnibuses and trams, and you arrive at the causes of the seclusion of Chiswick, when you realise how difficult it is to get there, or, being there, to get away.

## SECOND SIGHT.

(A FACT.)

"NAY, do not sail to-day, my lads," he said,  
The tall old fisherman with hoary hair,  
Standing upon the beach where lay the boat  
With her flag floating on the sunny air;  
While at the rocky headlands guarding Staithes,  
The flowing tide broke with a hollow roar.  
And the three fishers, tossing nets aboard,  
Paused for a moment, listening on the shore.

"I've had a vision, lads. Thou know'st my race,  
Father, and grandfather, and backward still,  
Have had the cruel gift of second sight,  
And known of coming doom against their will.  
I had the vision, just before the dawn;  
I saw, where Huntcliff towers grim and grey,  
I saw you men all struggling in the foam,  
I saw you drowning: do not sail to-day!"

"O. ay, I know the glass is firm eno',  
And sky and sea calm as a bairn asleep;  
And not a warning posted on the cross,  
And not a sign of danger on the deep.  
Yet, changeable as a woman in her moods,  
Is our North Sea, I've heard my father say.  
But that is neither here nor there, my lads;  
I had the vision, do not sail to-day!"

"Mebby we'd better humour him," said one,  
Whose twelve year boy was clinging to his hand;  
But his mate turned upon him with a laugh,  
That woke a mellow echo down the strand;  
"Humour him! with the fish as rank as aught,  
And neither food nor fire up there!" he said,  
And pointed to his cottage on the cliff,  
And shook, in merry scorn, his curly head.

A moment yet the father lingered there,  
"See, here's a penny, Bill, bide thou at home;"  
But the boy pushed the kindly bribe aside,  
And clamoured wilfully that he "must come."  
And so, they leapt aboard, and pushed her off;  
But, as the coble danced across the bay,  
They heard the old man, left upon the sand,  
Shout sadly to them, "Do not sail to-day."

Anxious the women, who had shivering heard  
Old Peter's warning, watched the sunny waves;  
Telling, as slow the sad hours wore by,  
Old tales of crews long laid in ocean graves.  
Anxious they saw the black squalls sweep across  
The great blue waters and the purple down;  
Till midnight closed upon the deepening dread,  
And never a coble beached below the town.

Next day, upon the sands 'neath Huntcliff Head,  
Lay the dead father, with his stiffened arm  
Round the dead boy, as if in doom and death  
He still was fain to keep him safe from harm;  
And with her helm unshipped, her timbers stove,  
The coble lay amid the boulders there,  
But the sea kept in her mysterious depths  
Young Jack with his bold eyes and curly hair.

Men guessed her rudder struck on sunken rock,  
Just as a squall had ta'en her sail aback,  
And shook their heads, and muttered o'er the glass,  
"He allis wer too venturesome, our Jack."  
But the old Seer listened to all unmoved,  
"When death must come, small heed to reck the way.  
I had the vision sent me at the dawn,  
Before, despite the bode, they sailed that day."

## AMONG THE LAVENDER.

### IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"I TOLD you so," said my friend, Jack Carlyon, looking across at me with that peculiarly aggravating expression of countenance that always accompanies the utterance of the above sentence.

I was out of sorts, and easily irritated.

"If you did, it doesn't make it any the better, or the pleasanter," I answered. "I could better have afforded to take a spell of the entire and complete rest this fool prates about at any other time than just now."

"I never knew a fellow that didn't say that when he'd got his back into a job, and had to give it up for a bit—don't you know?" said Jack, curling up one corner of his tawny moustache with his strong, lithe fingers, and looking the personification of perfect health and manly strength; while I—

Well, well, it was all very well for me to call Dr. Marchmont a fool. It let the steam off, somehow, but a long array of sleepless nights, backed up by an army of lesser symptoms, which my own medical knowledge told me spelt the words "overworked," convinced me that his kindly and urgent counsel was true, and that few men in London stood in greater need of a spell of rest and recruiting than Stephen Allardye—meaning myself.

When you get to "overworked," the next station on the journey is "broken-down." I did not wish to attain to this last. I resolved to leave London; bury myself among green fields, apple-orchards, and haystacks; and give myself up entirely to the conjugation of the verb, "to lazy." Not a manuscript will I look at, much less write; not a proof will I correct. All my intellectual faculties shall lie fallow for this needful space of rest. My thinking powers

are my stock-in-trade; I must needs husband them.

The problem how best to attain to this perfection of rural happiness and idleness faced me pitilessly.

Country lodgings? Bah! Bad cookery, ill-ventilated rooms, long-legged spiders on the bread-and-butter. Perish the thought. A country hotel? Worse still. Yokels keeping festival on Saturday nights; a mingled smell of tepid beer and stable-yard pervading everything. The very thought was irritating, and I opened my morning paper with an unamiable jerk.

Ill-temper ought not, one would think, to be rewarded. Mine was.

An advertisement stared me in the face; a message that might almost seem to have been sent straight from heaven.

"Address: M. R., Orchard Farm, near Wortlebury. A single gentleman can have the use of two airy rooms and attendance. Terms moderate. Good fishing."

Now I love fishing. I look upon it as a delicious phase of idleness.

Half my days swinging in a hammock underneath the chequered shadow of the apple-boughs, with no companion save pipe or cigarette as the mood dictates, the other half lounging on a river's brink, crushing the forget-me-nots and the golden king-cups, and watching my rod—not eagerly, only lazily—for the bite which may come or not, as it pleases. A month of such a life as this, and I should become vulgarly robust; I should sleep like one of the Seven Sleepers, and relish the plainest food like a ploughboy. But then, the plain food must be well cooked and cleanly served. Therein lies the difference between my possibilities and the ploughboy's.

I was, however, of a mind to think the food would be well dressed, and cleanly—nay, perhaps, daintily served. For I wrote to M. R., and M. R. replied; and her letter was the letter of a gentlewoman.

Orchard Farm! How delightfully suggestive a name! Doubtless, apple-trees there grow in a juxtaposition exactly fitted for the needs of that hammock in which I am to swing beneath earth and sky, I thought to myself; doubtless the grass is deliciously green; the apples nestling on the boughs deliciously pink on one plump cheek; and the thrushes laugh softly, as, with eager beak, they test the juices of the ripening plum. This last idea is perhaps hardly correct from the farmer's point of view, and

might offend M. R.'s thrifty soul; but I love the sound of the thrush's gurgling laugh, so let it stand, even at the sacrifice of a plum or two.

"Don't you get scribbling now," said Jack Carlyon, as he took leave of me on the Paddington platform. "You've overdone it, you know; and I tell you what it is, you'll break down, you know, if you don't look out."

Like a bird that sings the same few notes over and over again, Jack has piped the same tune to me persistently for some while back. It is a most unpleasant thing to be told the same thing over and over again. It is ever so much worse when the thing is true. I almost hated Jack as the train crawled out of the station, and then set its mind to going in earnest and puffed away into the open country.

And, to say the truth, this drifting away was welcome enough to me. In spite of all my asseverations to Jack Carlyon, I was conscious of many symptoms that, being interpreted, meant "worn out." I knew that a life without proof-sheets was, for a time, a necessity; and yet, like every true slave of the pen, I hug my chain, and love to linger lovingly in the company of my own creations.

Yet, must I change the rustle of "first proofs" and "revises" for the rustle of woodland whispers above my head. I must lay the busy pen aside, and let it speak no more for awhile.

It is a far cry from bustling Paddington to the sheltered nook in the Midlands where Orchard Farm is to be found; and, what with delays in catching trains on side lines, and such-like tiresome incidents of travel, dusk had almost grown to night before I reached my temporary home. The sky had become overcast, and a fine drizzle was falling as I alighted from a ramshackle kind of vehicle which the driver called a gig—but which struck me as bearing considerably more resemblance to a worn-out tax-cart—at the gate of Orchard Farm.

I could see the misty outlines of close-growing trees; and amid them shone the gleam of a light here and there, while the patch of radiance cast by an uncurtained lattice lay almost across my pathway.

Through the faint mist of rain came sweet scents innumerable, sweetbriar, roses, jasmine all giving out their sweet breath unstintingly, and over all, and dominating all, the old familiar perfume of "sweet lavender." I say "familiar," because—so

subtle is the association of a perfume—it took me back at once to the memory of my boyhood in my "mind's eye." I saw the little white-curtained room that welcomed me home from school as each holiday came round; the little room where my mother's touch seemed to linger everywhere, most of all in the scent of the lavender that came from tiny muslin bags, in which the purple spears were imprisoned.

Thus the lavender set me thinking of a long dead past; but all this was after a hearty and thoroughly countrified supper, at which a neat-handed, round-faced girl waited upon me, and with a quaint little "dip" of a curtsy, asked me "when I would be pleased to take my breakfast," and "the mistress said, would I have a bowl of milk, warm from the cow, sent up at seven, like the last gentleman who was at the farm?"

There was a certain ready sympathy in the girl's look and tone that convinced me that Orchard Farm was a sort of perpetual sanatorium; and that broken-down creatures of various kinds were in the habit of finding an asylum there, and being resuscitated with bowls of new milk and other country comforts. I even felt intuitively that a person in a state of rude health would hardly be acceptable to the inhabitants of this Midland homestead, where all sweet perfumes mingled so deliciously, and where the question how the lodger might be "getting on," was doubtless an interesting part of the day's routine.

The sense of deep restfulness was on me like a cool hand laid caressingly upon a fevered brow. Those long, weary hours of wakefulness which had beset me for many a week past—hours, each one worse and more weary than the last—seemed as a dream that is past.

The fine rain had ceased to fall; soft fleecy clouds moved gently across the sky, and a concord of sweet sounds rose from the deep bosom of the woods.

The nightingales were mad beneath the moon.  
And with strange ecstasy of gurgling song,  
Made night all jubilant. . . . .

"Now," thought I to myself, as I struck a match, and lighted my pipe, "did I ever hear nightingales before?"

Perhaps. But surely I had never been in so receptive a humour—never so attuned to the harmony of their exquisite clamour.

Seated at the open window, peacefully smoking, contentedly musing, I became conscious of the fact that the woodland

choristers sang to an accompaniment—a low, monotonous, deep note.

"It is the river," thought I, delightedly. "I must ask M. R. to-morrow about the fishing."

London, with all its whirr and stir; my editor's sanctum; the stairs that led thereto, by no means a Jacob's ladder; long, interminable slips of proofs; impatient printer's devils beating the devil's tattoo upon my door; all these things faded away like so many dissolving views. In a couple of hours I had become a complete rustic; my highest ambition was to catch fish in the river that was singing somewhere there among the woods and fields, bring them home in a creel, and get my rosy-faced Phillis to broil them for my tea. An humble aspiration, truly, but one which to any tired and overwrought brain, seems to hold the gift of rest and healing.

To "turn in" at half-past ten, instead of sitting up in company with the creations of one's own brain till far into the small hours, was a novelty, and seemed like a tempting of Providence in the matter of sleep. But no! Haunted by the perfume of sweet lavender, and looking dreamily forward to the bowl of milk, warm from the cow, I quickly fell asleep, my last conscious thought running thus: "Now 'the mistress' must be M. R." So I fell into the poppy valley of a dreamless night—a luxury, to me, new indeed.

#### CHAPTER II.

It is said that cats track the young and unsuspecting thrush by the sweetness of its song—fancy dining, with an appetite, on so much murdered music!—and with like subtlety did I stalk the river that lay far away among the trees. Led by the low crooning of its sweet, monotonous chant, I took my way over the fields in the first fresh hour of the morning. I was as a "giant refreshed." I seemed to have grown young in a night—a night of deep, unbroken slumber such as had not visited my eyes for many a long and weary week. "Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care." Oh! master-mind that "so read human nature like a book, and told its story to a listening world;" for surely no other expression of which language is capable could so express the renewal of the drooping energies, the restoration of the flaccid nerves, as those two happily chosen words, "knit up." Stepping briskly over the dew-laden, flower-pied grass, towards

where, in the deep heart of the wood, the river called to me with crooning voice, a sylvan Lorelei—thus ran my thoughts. The day was still a very young day, and the level sun-rays seemed just to tip the grass and flowers, and pierce through the holes of the thick-serried trees, and touch the ripples of the river to a smile.

How delicious the plunge beneath that sun-lit water; how like a river-god one felt, and then the pleasant return after the bath was done! The sense of invigoration in every vein, as swinging my towel in my hand, and with hat set well back on my head, in a fashion that would have led New Bond Street to look upon me as an escaped lunatic, I betook myself once more towards Orchard Farm.

I was fated to see two idylls—both equally beautiful in their way—on that return journey of mine. First, just at the turn of the lane, against a background formed by a bank all ablaze with golden buttercups, two starlings engaged in furious conflict. I stood still to watch the battle. What shrill cries of rage, what quick darting of beaks, what mad whirl of wings! And all the time the glorious prisms of the two swelling throats gleaming, and flashing, and glancing in the sunlight with every tint and glowing colour—now richest purple, now shining gold, now a wondrous, metallic green! Truly, a conflict of rainbows.

A few paces further brought me in view of another idyll, and this time a picture never to be effaced from my memory.

Many a year has now gone by since my summer trip to Orchard Farm, but every line, every shade of that picture is as clear in my mind at this moment as when first my eyes lighted upon it.

A man young, good to look upon, slender in form, and with a strange, eager look upon his face, sat upon a low bench, near which grew, tall and straight, a perfect forest of lavender bushes, softly purpled with a thousand spear-like blossoms. In this eager face, turned upwards towards me, yet utterly unobservant of me, as I felt instinctively, what I noticed most were the eyes, dark, bright, beautiful—but blind. It was easy to see that by their lack of all expression—indeed, the attitude of the man's whole figure told the same piteous tale. The thought struck me like a blow. Younger, by some years, than myself, sitting there in the balmy sunshine, with the fairest of nature's pictures stretched out before him, and

yet seeing nothing. Scenting the wild flowers' sweet air; feeling the warmth of the rays that touched the world and bade it live, and blossom, and pulsate; but living in a void of perpetual darkness. Standing there, bareheaded to the summer light, my hat swinging in my hand, my whole being strengthened and refreshed by the plunge into the sun-bright river, my very soul gladdened by the beauty of earth and sky around me, this man's isolation seemed a thing to shudder at—as though in the midst of exquisite verdure and flower-decked meadows, one should stumble upon a corpse.

Yet in the moment in which these thoughts, lightning-swift, darted through my mind, I realised also that that darkened life had its sun and light—the sun of a perfect love; the light of an exquisite sympathy. For, standing beside the blind man—leaning a little towards him, as if swayed unconsciously by an impulse of tenderness, one hand toying with the spears of lavender that sprang back elastic from her touch, the other resting on the shoulder of his old brown velvet shooting-coat—was a woman, tall, slender, yet some way past the freshness of youth; sad-eyed, sad-faced, indeed, in strange enough contrast to the cheerful sweetness of her voice. All the lines of her figure were modelled with a perfect grace that must, I thought, make every movement like music. Her hair, rippling crisply above her thoughtful brow, was touched with silver in broad lights, like the light that edged the ripples of the river where the tree shadows were broken overhead. And there were lines in her face that told of pain and watchfulness in the past—at least, I fancied so—taking everything in at a glance, as it were, and dazed with that strange, unaccountable feeling of having gone through exactly the same thing before, which most of us have experienced at one time or other, and of which no acceptable explanation has ever been offered by mortal man.

Just as I stepped up the slow incline of the grass-grown road, which led to the garden-gate, the man turned slightly towards his companion, laying his hand upon her arm.

"Margaret," he said, "show it to me. I can feel that it is beautiful."

I was close at the gate, but a charming gesture stopped me—a slight, imperious movement of the fair, shapely hand, a look from the gentle eyes, that seemed to take me into her confidence at once.

"He must be humoured. Stay a moment," that was what the look said.

I stood still, bareheaded. I was careful not to let the latch click.

She had two listeners instead of one—that was all.

There is nothing particularly novel in the expression, "word-painting." Every slave of the pen hears it often enough—often hears it used derisively. Nevertheless, word-painting is an art. It aims at bringing before the "mind's eye" in vivid and realistic colours that which the actual eye cannot see; and never had I realised to what perfection the art might be carried, until I stood before the gate of Orchard Farm in the early summer sunshine and listened to M. R.—for I was sure of her identity from the first—painting the morning landscape in its brightness and its beauty.

Nor did the story lose in the telling by the voice in which it was told. Sweet, low, yet full, were the accents that came to me across the lavender blossoms; all that Shakespeare himself could have wished for in woman. The man's dark, sightless orbs were meanwhile turned upon the speaker, so that, relieved against the grey of her simple gown, I could note the finely cut profile; the clustering, crested hair; the sweeping moustache beneath which, somehow, one recognised the sweetness and pathos of the mouth.

If this was my landlord, then I knew that I stood in the presence of an equal. If the woman by his side was M. R., then I knew that I had rightly divined her to be a gentlewoman—in every best sense and meaning of which that significant old-fashioned word is capable.

"Malcolm," she said, "this is our new lodger—Mr. Allardyce."

He rose from his place and stood there facing me in the sunshine—a strange, pathetic figure, blighted and blasted in the very noon-tide and hey-day of his manhood.

His hand, long, fine, pallid with the enforced inaction to which his affliction bound him, was stretched out towards me, and I, acting on an impulse as irresistible as prompt, met and grasped it with mine.

"We are glad to see you," he said. "You have a lovely day for your first amongst us."

"We are glad to see you." The words struck me strangely.

"She is there, 'the very eyes of him,'"

I thought. "Through her, he sees the world."

As I turned to his companion and shook hands with her in turn, I met her sad, sweet, grateful look, which in a moment struck a chord of sympathy between us; a chord that never in the future knew a note of discord. Now that I was nearer to "Margaret"—I knew her by no more definite name so far—I saw that she was a much older woman than I had at first sight supposed, but had preserved the essence of youthfulness by some subtle power within herself. Later on I learnt that this power was the intensity of love with which she had merged her own personality in that of another—the husband to whom she was light, life, everything. We three moved on towards the house, where through the open window my breakfast showed temptingly; M. R. toying with a bundle of lavender spears that she had gathered and set in her waist-belt. Under her touch they gave out more generously their pungent perfume; and so, for ever and ever, this holiday jaunt of mine came to be thought of, and remembered by me as "Among the Lavender."

"Considering my blindness, I can distinguish where people are pretty well," said he of the old shooting-coat. "You see I found out your whereabouts by the sound of your steps, even on the grass."

This outspoken reference to his condition surprised me. I, whose work in life is to write fluently, and therefore ought to be, to some extent, at all events, ready of speech, was dumb!

The whole thing seemed so sad, and had come upon me so unexpectedly.

"Mr. Ruthven rather prides himself upon his achievements, you see," said M. R., whom I now knew for Mrs. Ruthven, and she smiled; but I have seen tears less sad. I think she saw my trouble, and, recognising that it was for her husband's sake, accepted it as a pleasant gift. At least, that was what her eyes seemed to flash to mine across those sightless ones. But what she said was this:

"You will like to know about the fishing, will you not?"

I assented; and then with a grave bow, she led her blind husband into a room on the other side of the passage to mine.

Seated at my solitary breakfast-table, I was more ready to ponder on what I had heard and seen, than to eat.

There was so much pathos to me in that

old shooting-coat! It was a shooting-coat. No man who loves his gun can mistake a garment of that kind. So it had not been so very long since that this man Ruthven—some years younger than myself, as I have said, even now—had been hale and strong, and able to follow manly sports and pastimes. Perhaps he loved the touch of the old brown-ribbed velveteen, because it called to his mind those days of light and liberty.

On his hand I had noticed a ring, a plainly set deep red cornelian, and a strange fancy took me—born, no doubt, of my story-weaving trade—that it was like a drop of his very heart's blood, shed like a tear distilled by bitterest pain. I am sure the rosy-faced maid who brought in my rasher and toast thought I was a very bad case indeed, and should need whole gallons of milk "warm from the cow," before I began to "look up," like the other interesting lodgers at Orchard Farm had done!

Later in the day I found that in the quaint, old-world garden which appertained to Mr. and Mrs. Ruthven's abode, were two apple-trees, and betwixt their gnarled boles, a hammock, swaying gently in the gentle breeze. Extended in this sylvan nest, I watched my cigarette smoke steal up among the branches; counted the apples just beginning to grow rosy on one round cheek; listened to the hum of the bees in the tall hollyhocks hard by; struggled to discipline my thoughts, so that they should not go straying after "making copy" out of my surroundings—which, however, it is to be seen now they did—and finally sent myself off to sleep with my own castle-building.

The sudden laugh and chuckle of a thrush in a cherry-tree, just behind my head, woke me, and for a moment I was puzzled to know my own whereabouts, and why, on awakening from slumber, I had such a very prominent view of my own crimson socks and low shoes, and why I felt as if I had been trying to stand on my head in my sleep.

Orchard Farm, a white hand with a blood-stone ring, the ripple of the river—all these things crowded into my mind, jostling one another. Next came the thought: "How loud the bees hum in the country!" But surely it was one gigantic bee I heard monotonously crooning, or a whole hive, or a human voice, "soft and low," reading aloud.

I was up and out of my eerie in a moment, and with but small politeness, it must be

admitted, had made my way to a wide, low open window, or rather casement, set back on its hasp, so that prying roses peeped into the room beyond.

And what was there was truly well worth the seeing. Malcolm Ruthven—I cannot speak of him by any more formal name, he has now been held so long in my memory as simply Malcolm Ruthven—sat, or rather lay back in a low, lounging chair, his hands folded above his shapely head, the blood-red ring showing against the white interlaced fingers. Close beside him sat his wife. The concentrated light from the casement glittered on the whitening braids of her hair. I had not thought it was so grey before. Her dark, pathetic brows were slightly knit as she read; read, as she had “word-painted” the birth of the day for the eyes that could not see; read as one is seldom privileged to hear any one read. The great, low window was open widely. I could not lurk unseen. I saw the blind man stir uneasily; my step already had betrayed me. I grew bold, impudent, brazen-faced.

I seated myself on the broad stone ledge of the casement.

“Mrs. Ruthven, may I listen too?”

She looked up and smiled through the sheen of tears that brightened her eyes.

“Margaret will not mind having two listeners instead of one,” said her husband, speaking for her.

So she read, while he and I listened, the story of the “old, old fashion, death”—the story of the death of Paul Dombey.

But the scent of the lavender was everywhere, and the sweet bird-voices twittered in the leafy cover; and these, with the blue, cloudless dome above, and Heaven’s blest sunshine over all, spoke, even to my world-hardened heart, of “that older fashion yet of immortality!”

#### A CELEBRITY OF THE PALAIS ROYAL.

At the southern extremity of the Galerie d’Orléans, immediately facing the inner court of the Palais Royal, is a shop before which the Parisian lounge, if an adept in the noble science of gastronomy, is apt to pause and inspect the contents of the well-stocked windows with reverential admiration. There, according to the season, are displayed the earliest “primeurs” of every description, tastefully and symmetrically

arranged to attract the passer-by, and diffusing through the open door an aroma so deliciously seductive, that even the most rigid anchorite could hardly fail to succumb to the temptation. The finest truffled turkeys, the plumpest ortolans, the most delicately flavoured hams from Westphalia and Bayonne, Périgord and Strasburg pies, bundles of gigantic asparagus, peaches from Montreuil and “chasselas” from Fontainebleau, every conceivable dainty prized by the epicure is there in lavish profusion, the quality of each separate item being guaranteed by the name of the purveyor, the world-renowned Chevet.

It is not, however, with the present establishment, which is still presided over by members of the same apparently inexhaustible family, that we have to do; but with its original founder, a man of singular perseverance and energy, some curious and little known details of whose career, dating as far back as the close of the last century, may not be considered uninteresting.

A year or two before the outbreak of the revolution of 1789, there lived at Bagnolet, a village near St. Denis, a gardener or rather florist named Chevet, whose particular specialty was the cultivation of roses, a branch of horticultural science which was brought by him to a high state of perfection. Among many other varieties, he succeeded in first introducing to the notice of floral amateurs the “rose du roi,” a specimen of which, thanks to the patronage of the Princess de Lamballe, he obtained permission to offer to Marie Antoinette at Versailles. He soon became the recognised florist of the Court, one of his happiest discoveries being a tiny rose of such delicate odour as to be worn exclusively by Madame de Lamballe, on whose nervous system strong perfumes had a singular irritating effect, and from whom the flower received the name it still bears—“La Chevette.”

In the enjoyment of this uncontested monopoly, the horticulturist of Bagnolet took little heed of the growing symptoms of popular discontent, and pursued the even tenour of his way as unconscious of the impending danger as were his patronesses themselves. From this dream of security, however, he was rudely awakened by the expedition to Versailles and the massacre of the “gardes du corps” on the fatal tenth of August, 1792, which events were followed by the compulsory installation of the royal family at the Tuileries.

Then came the tidings of the flight to Varennes and its disastrous result, and finally the Temple, where, in spite of the watchfulness of the gaolers, a stray rose, the poor gardener's tribute of respectful sympathy, occasionally found its way into the hands of the Queen. But not for long; denounced on suspicion of secretly communicating with the prisoners, Chevet was arrested and brought before the Commissary of the "Section," who fortunately was in a lenient humour.

"Thy name?" he began.

"Chevet."

"Rose-grower at Bagnolet?"

"The same, citizen Commissary."

"Inventor of a rose called 'la chevette,' and cultivated expressly for aristocrats?"

"For any one who chooses to purchase it," replied the accused, trembling in every limb.

"In other words," sternly remarked the Commissary, "for those who live in luxury while the poor are starving. So heinous an offence deserves a short shrift and the guillotine; but I will spare thy life on one condition. Listen. The people want no roses; they want food; and it is thy duty, as a good patriot, to supply them with it. Go home, root up thy roses, and plant potatoes in their place; and mark me, if in twenty-four hours, a single rose-tree is left standing in thy garden, thy head shall answer for it. Go!"

Greatly relieved at being let off so easily, but not a little dismayed while reflecting on the precariousness of his future means of subsistence, Chevet returned to Bagnolet, and, with a heavy heart, began the work of devastation which had been so arbitrarily imposed on him. Before the twenty-four hours had expired, the once blooming parterre had become a waste, strewn with the relics of his favourite plants, soon to be replaced by the nutritious, but comparatively unprofitable esculent, originally introduced into France by the philanthropic Parmentier.

The ex-rose grower, however, was active and energetic, and by no means inclined to indulge in fruitless lamentations. In due course of time his potato field, supplemented by a variety of other vegetables, was so productive that he hired a stall in the vicinity of the Palais Royal, where he personally dispensed the supplies which arrived every morning from his kitchen garden. One of the neighbouring shopkeepers' happening to be a flour merchant, Chevet conceived the idea of utilising his culinary

instincts, and adding to the profits of his business, by the confection of certain delicately-flavoured and succulent patties, which—such dainties being rarely either seen or heard of in those troublous times—speedily procured him a host of customers, and commanded a ready sale.

Unfortunately, the success of this new specialty excited the jealousy of his fellow-tradesmen; and one of these having secretly informed against him as "encouraging the spread of luxury and extravagance," he was again arrested, and brought before the same Commissary, who had previously examined him.

"Decidedly, thou art incorrigible," said that functionary, with a menacing frown.

"How so, citizen Commissary?" faltered Chevet, who had not the least idea of what he was accused.

"Have I not already told thee that in the eyes of every good citizen all superfluities are criminal? Roses for aristocrats and luxurious tid-bits for gourmands are alike an insult to the necessities of the poor, who want bread and nothing else. I warn thee for the last time, another offence against the Republic, and le père Sanson will tell thee the rest!"

Once more reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence, Chevet, who had a large family dependent on his exertions, almost despaired of improving his position, and it needed all his courage to enable him to support this unexpected reverse of fortune. But better days were at hand. The downfall of Robespierre, and the consequent termination of the Reign of Terror, suddenly changed the aspect of affairs. The Parisians, relieved from the tyranny which had so long oppressed them, with one accord eagerly welcomed the advent of a new era, and soon forgot their past tribulations in the delirious excitement of uncontrolled liberty. Money, which had been jealously hoarded during the Terror, now circulated freely; pleasure, under the auspices of Joséphine Beauharnais and the fascinating Madame Tallien, resumed its sway; and the reign of the "muscadins" began. Chevet was not the last to profit by the change. No longer apprehensive of any interference on the part of the authorities, he devoted himself heart and soul to a patient study of the culinary art, and having succeeded in disposing advantageously of his little property at Bagnolet, opened a small shop not far removed from the site of the present emporium in the

Palais Royal. There he gradually acquired the reputation of an intelligent and capable "chef," and, being patronised by such noted epicures as Cambacères, d'Aigrefeuille, and Brillat Savarin, became a recognised authority in gastronomic matters; and before his death, which took place some years later at a good old age, he had the satisfaction of founding the establishment which still bears his name, and which has been presided over by a long line of descendants for almost a century. One of these, a worthy inheritor of the ancestral talent, and the chief representative of the family, towards the commencement of the Third Empire, had been educated at the college of Sainte-Barbe, the old pupils of which institution were in the habit of meeting each other once a year at dinner in memory of their scholastic days. Chevet was a regular attendant at this annual banquet, and on one occasion arrived with a singularly shaped bottle under his arm, which he deposited very carefully on a side-table.

"What have you there?" enquired the President of the Society.

"Wait till dessert, and you will see," replied Chevet, with a mysterious air. "A little surprise which, I think, will not be disagreeable to any one here."

During the repast, the "chef" succeeded in baffling the curiosity of his colleagues by a persistent silence; but at its close he rose from his chair, and handling the bottle as delicately as if it had been a new-born infant, placed it on the table before him, and reverently uncorked it.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "before you taste its contents, I will tell you how this bottle came into my possession, at the risk of betraying a secret which, I am afraid, is not very creditable to me. You may, perhaps, remember that after the death a few years ago of the Marquis d'Aligre, the richest and most miserly nobleman in France, all his effects, including his wines, were sold by auction. Well, I was aware that, among other extraordinary varieties, his cellars contained some two or three dozen of the finest Tokay, a present from a Hungarian magnate, which would necessarily figure in the sale. This nectar I resolved, if possible, to secure for myself as an invaluable adjunct to certain grand dinners which I was occasionally called upon to supply, and I laid my plans accordingly.

"When the day appointed for the sale arrived, as I was known to be a fairish

judge of wine, I had no difficulty in obtaining a seat near the auctioneer, and awaited the announcement of 'Lot 72,' with not a little anxiety. The fabulous prices realised by the Château Laffite, Clos Vougeot, and other important vintages, and the presence of more than one redoubtable connoisseur, made me tremble for the success of my project, and I inwardly shivered as the possibility of failure suggested itself to me.

"At length 'Lot 72,' consisting of thirty-four bottles of Tokay, was put up by the auctioneer, and a sample produced, the first glass of which I managed to secure. Lifting it to my lips and taking a sip of the contents, I made a horrible grimace, and, setting down the glass in well-feigned disgust, declared that the so-called Tokay was not wine, but vinegar. Fortunately for me, after so decided an expression of opinion, no one ventured to question its accuracy, or intimated the slightest wish to follow my example, so that the entire lot was eventually knocked down at a mere nominal price to a confederate of my own. I must confess that I had some scruples of conscience when the precious cargo was safe under lock and key in my cellar; but, reflecting that the Marquis's heirs were entitled to divide no less than twenty millions of francs between them, I considered they were not very much to be pitied, and began to regard my offence as comparatively venial.

"This," added Chevet, pointing to the bottle, "is one of the last dozen, and when you have tasted the ambrosial liquid it contains, I think you will own that, however irregular my mode of proceeding may have been, the temptation was irresistible!"

On this head the verdict was unanimous, and his colleagues of Sainte-Barbe, with one accord, admitted the existence of "extenuating circumstances;" only suggesting that in order to give them an opportunity of confirming their favourable judgement, it would be advisable, on the next anniversary, to produce another bottle of Monsieur d'Aligre's Tokay.

The same Chevet counted among his constant patrons more than one Imperial official, possessing no "cordon bleu" of his own, and therefore obliged to depend on the establishment of the Palais Royal for the state dinners which, in virtue of his position, he was occasionally under the necessity of giving.

At one of these a ludicrous incident oc-

curred, the cause of which will be explained hereafter. The table was laid for twenty-six persons, all of whom were present, and the soup was served. By some apparent miscalculation, however, when eighteen of the guests had been helped—the last two or three very sparingly—the supply ceased altogether, and the remainder were forced to console themselves with the regulation glass of Madeira. Then came a magnificent turbot, to which those who had had no soup were helped first; but long before it had made the round of the table, not a morsel was left on the dish, and nearly a third of the party were as hungry as when they sat down. The same unsatisfactory process continued during the whole of the banquet—every fresh course was impatiently awaited, and with a similar result; and finally, when the dessert was handed round, one of the most influential personages considered himself fortunate in securing a toothpick.

Naturally enough, this Barmecide entertainment was by no means charitably commented on, the entire blame, of course, falling to the share of the Amphitryon, who, poor man, was even more perplexed and annoyed by it than any of his guests. His wife, however, a lady of some personal attractions, and desirous of displaying them to the best advantage, was the real culprit, the deficit in the supplies, as it afterwards appeared on enquiry, being wholly attributable to what she doubtless considered a perfectly justifiable stroke of feminine diplomacy. Her pin-money not sufficing for her requirements, she had conceived the ingenious idea of supplementing it by the appropriation of a tolerably large percentage on the sum allowed by her husband for the expenses of the evening; and, in order to avoid taking any member of the household into her confidence, went herself to Chevet, and directed a dinner to be prepared, not for the twenty-six persons invited, but only for fourteen.

"It will be rather hard," she thought, "on gourmands like Monsieur So and So; but, after all, what does it signify? My dressmaker's bill is of more importance than a ministerial corvée!"

When Chevet heard what had happened, he was inconsolable.

"Another such mishap," he exclaimed, with a tragic emphasis worthy of Vatel, "and my name is dishonoured! Her Excellency may provide herself elsewhere in future; I work for her no more!"

And he kept his word.

## THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER V.

It was a dull and stormy night, when the pale young moon could only occasionally struggle forth from the clouds heaped around and over her, to cast a faint watery light on a stormy sea and a wind-swept coast. The "Belle Armande" was ready to sail. Her crew—who had been idling about Orkney for the last two months, joining in the fishing occasionally by way of work, and saying gallant things in broken English to shy or giggling peasant girls by way of amusement—had collected once more at Stromness, prepared to start at day-break. Gaspard Harache had decided to return to Havre in the vessel he had helped to repair, and meant to go on board at midnight. The Captain wondered why the young ship-builder could not come aboard at a more reasonable hour, and pass the night on the vessel; also why the boat which was to bring him from the shore was to wait for him at a lonely point on the left side of the bay, instead of at the pier belonging to the Masons' Arms, the hotel where he had lodged; but he complied with Gaspard's wishes, and, perhaps, made a shrewder guess at the reason of them than he cared to show.

The fitful moonlight fell on the stones of Stennis, bringing now one and now another into momentary prominence, while the rest of the circle stood robed in the darkness of the night as in a black mantle. Now a sudden gleam fell on the great altar stone in the centre, revealing two figures standing with clasped hands before it. Gaspard's dark eyes were gleaming, and, perhaps, there was more excitement shown in his close, nervous grasp of her hand than in Thora's trembling. She was afraid, indeed; but her fear held no regret for the peaceful life she was leaving, no doubt as to the happiness of the future, only anxiety lest her flight should be discovered before her escape was secure.

"I swear before Odin and the gods of my fathers that I take Gaspard Harache for my husband, and will love and obey him as is a wife's duty," said the girl.

"I swear before Odin and the gods of my fathers that I take Thora Sweynson for my wife, and will love and cherish her as is a husband's duty," returned Gaspard,

and, his mind reverting unconsciously to the habit of bygone days, when the customs of his creed had more hold on him than now, he lifted his hand and made the sign of the cross. Thora caught his arm. "You must not do that," she said, "or Odin will not bless our troth-plight. He does not love the cross."

"You believe in Odin, then, Thora?"

"Of course I do. He is not so powerful as he used to be; but he is still strong, and he fights against Christ. When God will not help them people pray to Odin, and he aids them from hatred to the White Christ. Do not you believe in him, Gaspard?"

"Ma chérie, I believe in whatever gods you worship," replied Gaspard, as he led her away; but in his heart he said: "If I believed anything I should say that we had called on the devil to bless our marriage."

Over the rough, heathery ground they went—stumbling sometimes in the darkness, uncertain whither their steps led them, doubting if they would ever reach the high-road—Thora thinking at every sound that she was pursued, Gaspard beginning to feel something of a bridegroom's triumph. Not till they were on board the "Belle Armande" did Thora feel herself safe; but when the anchor was raised and the ship sailed out of Stromness Bay in the grey, gusty morning, she knew that her longing was to be satisfied—she was on her way to France.

Every mile that they sailed to the southward was a delight to Thora—it took her farther from Orkney. She was in high spirits, picturing the old minister's grief when he found her gone, and laughing as she thought of the fruitless search he would undertake, and the anger he would feel when he discovered the truth. Her merriment jarred a little—ever so little—on Gaspard, who could not help feeling that his conduct had been less than honourable towards the old man who, against his better judgement, had favoured his suit so long as it was feasible, and whose final refusal had been so sympathetically uttered and had been founded on such good grounds; and he wondered a little that Thora felt no regret at giving pain to one who had shown her a kindness to which she had no claim. Besides, the interview with his mother, which every hour made more imminent—when he should beseech her, by her love for him, to receive Thora as his wife—was depressing Gaspard, and

made him take unkindly to mirth of any sort.

With any one else he would have been irritable; but, even when her words pleased him least, one glance at Thora's face—at the blue eyes, grown darker and brighter with happiness, at the golden hair which the wind had disarranged into tiny ringlets round her brow, at the delicate features and dainty colouring—was enough to make him forget all vexations for the moment, and to fill him with a passionate pride that this loveliness was his for ever.

"I would that there could be no darkness," he murmured, "that I might for ever gaze upon your beauty. Shall I ever be able to gaze long enough at your face to satisfy myself?"

Yes, Gaspard, you will; and before many months are past. There never yet was face or form so lovely that, if the soul within was not worthy of its casket, could chain a man's fancy for a lifetime!

At last the French coast came in sight; and early one bright day the "Belle Armande" entered the harbour of le Havre. Thora was all excitement and curiosity. The numerous ships; the busy quay; the voices chattering in a vivacious, unknown tongue—there were a hundred things to attract her on each side, and she called Gaspard's attention to one and another, till at last she noticed how he was growing momentarily more and more gloomy.

"What is the matter, Gaspard?" she asked.

"I am thinking of my mother," he replied.

"What does it matter about your mother?" she exclaimed, laughing rather shrilly. "She may be angry for a time, but she must give in soon if she wishes to see anything of her son. You are mine, now, not hers; and, unless she is civil to me, she will not have much opportunity of being kind to you. Why should you mind offending her?"

"My child, if it were not that you do not remember a mother's love, you would understand how bitter a pain it is to grieve one's mother," answered Gaspard, gravely. "Moreover, you do not understand all; she has more power than you think."

He left Thora at an hotel while he went home. His arrival was unexpected, for he had not written to his family since receiving his mother's letter refusing consent to his marriage; but all the more did his return seem a thing to rejoice over, and Madame Harache, with Barbe and Lucie, clung to

him, weeping with gladness at seeing him again, and mingling scraps of home news with questions about his experiences of foreign parts. Sweet as all this affection was to the young man, his heart grew more and more sad as he responded to it, knowing, as he did, that his marriage with Thora Sweynson would anger his mother, and might result in alienating his sisters from him. He felt that he must steel himself against it at once, for already he was conscious that home-ties were assuming a dominance over him that was a disloyalty to Thora.

"Ma mère," he said, breaking in upon the happy chatter, "it will give me much pleasure to tell you and my sisters of all my adventures afterwards; but at present there is a subject which I wish to discuss with you."

The grave tone, the formal words, put Madame Harache on the alert at once. Her face grew hard and stern as she bade Barbe and Lucie, who were bewildered at their brother's request, go into another room.

"Well, my son, what is it you have to say?" she asked, when they were alone.

"I wish to speak to you of the young lady whom I told you I wished to marry—Thora Sweynson."

"I have already given my answer to the very absurd request which you addressed to me. There is no more to be said on the subject. I trust that you now see the wisdom of my decision."

"I do not see it."

"That is a pity; but you will do so soon."

"I think not. I hope not; for her happiness must depend on the continuance of my love."

"Indeed! You flatter yourself, I think," said Madame Harache, ironically. "A girl is ready to love any man who loves her; perhaps the young person you speak of has already found a successor to you."

Gaspard took no notice of the interruption. "For my sake," he went on, "she has left her home, her friends, her country. She has come to a land where she knows no one, where she can speak only a few words of the language, and where her future welfare depends entirely on you."

"I do not understand you, Gaspard," answered his mother, coldly, turning her head away from the pleading look in his earnest eyes. "If what you tell me be true, I am greatly shocked at your conduct.

One does not expect young men to be angels, that is understood; but I did not think you would have persuaded an ignorant, and possibly hitherto innocent girl, to leave her home with you. I am grieved, disappointed in you. One should always respect innocence, even in a barbarian; but I do not see how anything I can do or say can affect her fate. Of her own free will she has chosen degradation; and she must abide by her choice. It is sad; but it is inevitable."

"Mother, do not talk of degradation in connection with her. She is as innocent and honourable as yourself; she is conscious of no shame in her love for me; she is as deserving of respect as my sisters."

"It is possible," Madame Harache admitted in her cold, ironic voice. "One reads of such characters in novels. Perhaps it is possible that a woman whose life seems to be one long infamy, may be an angel in the disguise of a devil. The novelists may be right; but I do not understand such people. I understand only the laws of society, which ordain that a woman who lives with a man to whom she is not married, cannot be received by respectable people."

Gaspard had been patient hitherto, hoping to win his point more by pleading than by anger; but the cool, business-like way in which Madame Harache settled Thora's future position roused him to protest.

"Do not speak of Thora as if she were one of those women," he cried; "do not dare to suggest that she has committed a sin. She is my wife. I love and honour her with all my heart."

His mother showed no sign of anger at his words. She smiled, but her smile was not pleasant to see. "You are vehement, and inaccurate, mon fils," she answered, quietly. "You say that this young girl is your wife. According to the laws of what country are you married to her—France or England?"

"According to the custom of her own islands."

"Indeed. Is that custom—I perceive that you do not say law—recognised as legal in any other country? Are its obligations binding on a French subject?"

"That does not matter; I hold them to be binding upon me."

"It matters a great deal; the legality of your marriage depends on it. But I need ask no more questions. I know, and so do you, that any form of marriage you may

have gone through is worth nothing without my consent, you being a Frenchman and subject to the laws of your country. That consent you will never gain. This woman, therefore, is not your wife, and my answer to your request is that I cannot take any notice of the existence of your mistress."

Gaspard started to his feet.

"Mother, you cannot mean me to take this as your answer!" he exclaimed. "Have you no pity on a young girl, innocent and trusting, sinless in intention as any bride who ever went to the altar? Will you take advantage of a cruel and unjust law to bring down upon her the penalties of a sin she has not committed? You are a woman yourself, and know that to a woman reputation is more than life. Will you then be guilty of a crime more heinous than murder? Absolute power is in your hands; use it to do justice, not to wrong an innocent woman. Accept Thora as my wife; believe me, no other than she shall ever bear that title. For the sake of the womanhood you share with her you cannot refuse my prayer."

"For your sake, because I love you and desire your welfare, I can and do refuse it," she replied. "You have a boy's passion for a pretty face, and you forget that marriage is for a lifetime, and that beauty will not provide the comfort of your whole life. I remember these things, and save you from the consequences of your folly. A year hence, when you are tired of your belle sauvage, you will thank me for saving your whole career from a folly that would have ruined it."

"I will never thank you for letting dishonour rest on the head of the woman I love."

Madame Harache only laughed, and made no direct answer.

"Youth is so certain, age so distrustful of everything—especially of the assurances of youth," she said, more to herself than to him.

Gaspard waited, thinking she would speak to him again; hoping, against all

reason, that she would yield at last. But Madame Harache sat silent and calm, as if only the most trivial matters had been discussed and she had been rather bored by them. Only, she did not look at her son, but turned her chair so that she could keep her eyes fixed on the window, as if something she saw in the street was what interested her most.

The pause had become almost unendurable to both, even to Madame Harache, although she gave no sign of the nervous strain she was undergoing, when Gaspard spoke.

"Madame," he said, striving vainly to keep his voice calm, "I have heard from you words which, from any woman, would have grieved me; when my mother utters them I cannot but feel ashamed that her blood is in my veins. Henceforth I consider myself free from the duty of a son, and devote myself entirely to my wife. Adieu."

He waited a few moments longer; but as Madame Harache neither spoke nor moved, at last he left the room. She started then, and, rising from her seat, she took a step or two as if to call him back. But she restrained herself. "Let him go to-day," she said to herself. "If I were to call him back now, I might yield to his foolish prayer. Some day he will return of his own accord, and thank me for what I have done."

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